

North Point Church working to support Morris Bye Elementary students through Faith Community Partnership



When Pastor David DeVel, the lead pastor at North Point Church, learned about the Faith Community Partnership between the Anoka-Hennepin School District and faith-based organizations to mobilize people to meet the basic needs of students, he was excited to get his Coon Rapids-based church involved. As fate would have it, Maryellen Lyman is a member of North Point Church and an employee of the Anoka-Hennepin School District. As a long-time supporter of Morris Bye Elementary, Lyman spoke to DeVel about getting involved with the school.

DeVel, whose teenaged daughter attended Morris Bye, met with principal Janel Wahlin and was amazed

to learn about the needs of Morris Bye students and their families. The economy has hit the community hard and many families are in need of assistance.

"I was surprised by how many kids depend on the food program at Morris Bye and when there isn't school, they might not get to eat," DeVel said. "We have to help because it shouldn't be that way."

DeVel's congregation was very excited to work with Morris Bye. Becky Alban and Kathie Haugan volunteered to work directly with Rita Heitman, Morris Bye's school social worker, to learn the school's needs and communicate that back to the church.

At the beginning of the school year, church members donated school supplies. Next they held a food drive. With a concern for students who eat both breakfast and lunch at school, food was collected and given to families in need during the fall break in mid-October.

The church now has its sites set on the holidays and upcoming cold weather. Members are holding another food drive this Sunday, Nov. 20, to collect Thanksgiving items. The church, which meets at Northdale Middle School, will also celebrate Thanksgiving with a free meal after the 10:15 worship service. All are invited to attend.

In addition to providing families Thanksgiving items, like the break in October, the church's goal is to provide food boxes to the school on a monthly basis to be used for families who need extra help.

Members of North Point Church are also working to collect coats, snow pants, hats, and mittens.

"We will need to stock these items through January," Heitman said. "We have students who move from out of town and they are not always prepared for the winter. Right now we have a family from California and they have no idea what to expect for winter."

Heitman said students who receive food and clothing from the North Point donations are identified by a staff member or the parents/guardians ask the school for this assistance. When a student is identified by a staff member, Heitman calls the parents or guardians to ask if the family would like to receive the donations.

Heitman said the overall goal of the Faith Community Partnership is to serve the basic needs of the students and the school community. DeVel said the school needs help, and North Point Church can provide help.

"Want to be a blessing for the city," DeVel said. "We want to go where people need help; that's what Jesus would do, so that's what we should do, too."